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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREST SERVICE

Report on Fire Control and Prevention

Submitted by

Homer E. Anderson

and based on

1938 Summer Field Trip

National FS Library
USDA Forest Service

JAN 25 2011

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Fort Collins CO 80526

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Index

		Pages
I.	Foreword	
II.	General Discussion	1-20
	Section 1, Public Camp Grounds	1-2
	Section 2, Overflow from Public Campgrounds	2-3
	Section 3, Cigarettes	3-5
	Section 4, Posters	6-7
	Section 5, Radio	8
	Section 6, Radio Records	8
	Section 7, Newspaper Stories	8-9
	Section 8, Picture Shows for Schools	9-10
	Section 9, The Contact Man	10-12
	Section 10, Forest Rangers	12-13
	Section 11, Show Me Trips	13
	Section 12, The C.C.C.	13-14
	Section 13, Roads	14-15
	Section 14, Grazing	15-16
	Section 15, Fishing	16-17
	Section 16, Big Game Control	17-18
	Section 17, Law Enforcement	18-20
III.	Answers to Forest Service Questions	20-24

Foreword

At the beginning of the summer of 1938 I was requested by the regional office of Region #1 to go into the National Forests of Montana, having my headquarters at Butte and working particularly with the concentrated population in that vicinity, as a private citizen in order that I might discover facts as to public opinion regarding the Forest Service, and then to submit such information as I was able to obtain in a written report.

All of my contacts were made with persons who knew me only as Homer E. Anderson, superintendent of schools, and as a fisherman.

In preparing this report, it seemed best to submit the data in a general report, and then to endeavor to answer the following questions by references to the data contained in these sections.

QUESTIONS TO WHICH THE FOREST SERVICE REQUESTED ANSWERS

A.

1. Do people understand (a) the relation of certain careless acts (throwing away burning cigarettes, leaving campfires, etc.) to the possible destruction of the forests and (b) injury to their own welfare?

2. Are such careless acts due mainly to lack of desire to keep the forests from burning, to ingrained habits, or to ignorance of just what to do and how, in order to be sure fires are not started?

3. Based on the answers to 1 and 2 above, what are their reactions to specific fire prevention means we are using (posters, newspaper stories, personal contacts on the ground, law enforcement, etc.)?

4. What changes of emphasis on present means, and what new means should be employed in our fire prevention work?

5. What appeals can we make that will create a sense of "personal ownership" values in the national forests, and a definite personal desire to protect them?

6. How much do the people understand of Forest Service objectives and what is their attitude toward our policies on wildlife management, recreation, grazing, timber management?

7. Are we reaching these people with present educational methods and, if not, what media are the most effective?

8. Do those who might be considered as permanently unemployed desire to remain in Butte and be supported by WPA jobs, work in construction camps on large PWA projects, or live in smaller communities with employment provided by federal agencies sufficient to give a fair annual income?

B. In addition to answers to the above questions, it is desired that the investigator embody in his report as clear an account as possible of the following traits of the group investigated.

1. Mores (conventions which these people consider 'right')

2. Religion

3. Superstitions

4. Economic status

5. Motive for forest burning

6. Attitudes toward newspapers, radio programs, posters, etc.

7. Attitude toward forest burning

8. Attitude toward Forest Service

   a. Personnel

   b. Forest Service regulations as affecting the group investigated.

Section 1, Public Camp Grounds

Lower Rock Creek drainage in the Lolo National Forest, east of Missoula, now has improved camp grounds so that they really take care of the public when it goes out to enjoy the National Forest. The stoves in the larger grounds are made of cast iron tops built up with stones. Tables are made of lo . Comfort stations are conveniently located. In addition to these merous improved campgrounds, individual green board tables and a barrel ve are found in almost every spot where family parties wish to st that father may go fishing. The road in this area is patrolled by a contact man, and anyone who has lived in camp grounds can readily see the difference between the camps that are patrolled and those that are not. These grounds are clean, well kept and neat. I noticed some foreign cars camping in this area - perhaps the good news had been passed along to them by other people. It is, however, very difficult for strangers to find these campgrounds, and I would like to see maps showing their location made and distributed through the Montana Port of Entry Stations.

The campgrounds, picnic grounds, etc., located between Anaconda and Georgetown Lake are used every day by picnic parties, and by young people at night. The inexpensive green tables and barrel stoves are just as popular as the tables which are costly and hard to build. The larger picnics put on by the lodges, Montana Power Co. and civic organizations make use of these grounds almost every day. Beer is usually served at these picnics, and the picnickers bring along a soft ball, organize teams, and have a lot of fun. As a rule, children are also brought along to share in the sport. The lodges generally appoint committees to clean up after everyone has gone home, and those committees do a good job of cleaning, especially when the contact man is in attendance.

There is a real problem, however, where campgrounds are located on small lakes (Echo Lake) that are almost completely surrounded by summer-home-sites and a resort situated on a homestead and run by a man who wants quiet so that he can cater to the better class of people. People coming into the public campgrounds are out for a good time, have just a short time to stay, in many cases, and hope to make the most of it. The forests have a strange effect on such people as they seem to revert back to the primitive by shouting and making a lot of noise. The privacy of other people who are trying to sleep is completely forgotten or ignored. The summer-home owners and the resort owner blame the Forest Service for not disciplining such people. If these people who make the noise are regulated, they object for they feel that this is, after all, a free country. If lakes are set aside for summer home sites, and the public is kept out, severe criticism results. The camper feels that if the camp is kept clean, and if he is careful with fire, the Forest Service rules are obeyed.

Of course, the drunk, boisterous individual must be dealt with because he may do damage. The noisy man who is simply having a good time or the noisy group bent on spending the night out usually quiet down for the contact man. The contact man can't be in every campground on such occasions; so there must be a definite carry-over or fear that he may be coming at any moment so that these people will behave. On campgrounds where there isn't a contact man, these troublesome people rule supreme. These occasions are rare--luckily--on campgrounds farther away from town.

When the contact men patrol the campgrounds, there is a decided change. Fires are not left burning, and I have watched campers even put out fires in the campstoves. The camp is usually clean, and if it isn't, the contact man cleans it up for the next camper. There is a difference in contact patrolmen, however, and they, too, need to be checked, for they often fail to clean the campgrounds or else spend too much time with individual campers.

Careless cigarette habits seem to prevail on campgrounds, whether they are patrolled or not. The group that comes into these camp grounds for a "beer bust" from Butte or Anaconda has very little if any, regard for posters or for contact men if these men do not approach the groups in the right manner. These people are out for a good time--no one is going to stop them. They reason that a little noise might bother other campers but that no one can show that he is having a good time if he doesn't make a lot of noise. This attitude seems particularly true of younger people.

In one case, the members of a drunken party were called back in the morning by the contact man to clean up the camp. They were sorry for their actions of the night before and cleaned up the camp. Of course, if they had been farther out where no check were made, the debris would have been left for the next man.

Section 2, Overflow From Public Campgrounds

Every Saturday and Sunday the public campgrounds around Butte and Anaconda are not able to take care of the large number of people who come out into the forest for their Sunday picnics. Very few of these people stay over night, although occasionally there is an overnight camper in these campgrounds. This fact is also true of campgrounds farther away, such as the ones of Copper Creek and Stony Creek.

This overflow crowd often comes into the campgrounds and finds all the tables and stoves taken. They go on to the next campground if there is one close enough. Here, the same condition, as a rule, exists. The picnickers are out for the day, however, have their picnic lunch with them, and do not intend to return home until late in the evening.

I followed this overflow crowd one Sunday to discover what happened when they found the campgrounds filled with people. They went on up or down the stream and stopped at the first spot that was available off the main road, built their camp fire, spread their food out and enjoyed the remainder of the day.

Now, I believe this overflow crowd adds to the man-caused forest fires in the Deer Lodge Forest. If it were possible for these people to find a table and stove in the campground area, they would be happy to remain there, but as it is, this space is not available; so they wander all over the forest to find a location in which to enjoy their outing.

If "Father" is a fisherman, the family will usually come into the campground, and "Mother" and the children will remain behind, while "Father" takes the car and goes out along the stream to his favorite spot.

Business houses in many local communities, such as Phillipsburg, realize that these campgrounds are an asset to their locality, and would like to see a great many more, particularly in the Phillipsburg area or on Ross's Fork, Middle Fork, and Rock Creek. I wish to relate the following field experience to show this need:

I purchased some camping supplies from a local merchant in Phillipsburg; then inquired about the camping areas in that vicinity. He said that he did not know of any except the one in Copper Creek, but added that an ideal place to fish was the spot at which the Ross's Fork and Middle Fork came together. He suggested that I call the local forest ranger to make inquiry regarding the public campgrounds in the area. On second thought, he said, "I'll call for you", and he did. He asked the forest ranger if there were any public campgrounds in the area that were supposed to have good fishing at that time of year. The ranger replied that there weren't any campgrounds in that vicinity except the one at Copper Creek; and then the business man went on to tell him of the great need for more campgrounds, suggesting that action should be taken immediately to secure more of them.

The overflow crowd that I speak of is apparent in the Boulder River country, the Rock Creek country, the Big Hole country, and in the campground area around Georgetown, Echo, and Silver Lake every Sunday during the summer months.

Section 3, Cigarettes

Throwing away cigarettes is a matter of habit. In everyday life many a smoker tosses his cigarette into the street or leaves it lying on a desk or window sill in a public building. I have watched smokers follow these same habits in the forests. It is not uncommon for people riding in automobiles on National Forest land to flip out

a cigarette just as they do along the public highways or along crowded streets. This occurrence is easy to detect at night when one can see the light from the cigarette. To further illustrate this point, I wish to relate a field experience.

Case No. I

While I was camped in the public campground at Reservoir Lake on the Beaverhead Forest, a car from Butte--Ford V8, 1933 Model, Coupe--arrived with father, mother, son, daughter, and a complete camping outfit, including a tent. The father had worked for the A.C.M. Company for more than twenty years--fifteen of these years he had spent driving mules in the mine. He was of Irish descent, and the mother was of German descent. The daughter appeared to be ready to enter high school. The son had been graduated from high school in 1937 and was at this time steadily employed by the A.C.M. Company. Although the father was out of work, the son was working steadily because of the fact that he was an athlete and played on the mine's soft-ball team.

This family had made a custom of going into some new country about 130 miles or more distant from Butte each week end (typical of many mining families) and usually the mother and daughter went along. By driving this distance from Butte over bad roads and then by hiking some distance they found it possible to reach inaccessible places where fishing was good, and the two men loved to fish. I gave them several flies to try, and they invited me to join their party. Saturday afternoon, we fished a small stream--covered with willows--full of eastern brook trout. The men smoked tailor-made cigarettes almost constantly, dropping them whenever they were finished and giving no thought to putting them out. Of course, along the stream they were in safe territory most of the time. During the day, we caught many fish, and these men saved them all, regardless of size. The limit of fish, according to law, is twenty-five, but this had no meaning for they told many stories of heavy catches over the limit and stated that all of their fish were given to Butte people upon their return.

Sunday morning, we took their car to drive up a very rough road because the filling-station man at Ralston had told them about some good fishing several miles up the valley. During this ride, I observed that these people gave no thought as to where their cigarette stubs were thrown. The boy rode on the fender so that he could open gates. He smoked, of course, whenever the desire came--only once did he use any care: he threw the cigarette into the road so the car wheels would put it out.

Saturday evening, we found a raft and went fishing on the lake. During the conversation, the fact became apparent that the "Common Stiffs", as they called themselves, of Butte felt that several of the lakes in the vicinity of Butte, such as Moose Lake, were closed to

the public because too many summer-home sites were taken up by the "Big Shots" from Butte and Anaconda. The father said that the ranger in that district had encouraged them to get their application for sites in early on a lake that hadn't been opened up as yet, but the road was being built into that territory so that it would soon be possible to obtain their lease.

The women that accompany the fisherman, the hunter, or family picnics, present a problem which needs immediate attention. There are as many women smokers today as there are men smokers and they seem to be more careless than men in disposing of their cigarettes. Very few of these women have seen a forest fire or realize the damage that can be done by one cigarette.

I watched a mother and a dad bring their daughter and her companions with camping equipment to Echo Lake for an outing of several days. Father cut the wood supply and set up the camp, while mother and the girls emptied the car of provisions. Mother warned the girls to be careful of the water--not to go out into the lakes. Then the girls were left behind to have a real time. Just as soon as the folks were over the hill, the hidden package of cigarettes was uncovered, and the girls were all smoking. (They were juniors in high school.) The butts were tossed at random, and, if the fuels had been dry, fires would have been started in the camp--probably noticed and put out, of course--but it wasn't long until some boys who were camped nearby gained an introduction by letting their baseball roll into camp. Hikes were proposed and undertaken into the surrounding forest.

Four boys from Butte came into this same campground one evening with a pony of beer. I learned also that they had five packages of cigarettes to last over one day and were worried for fear they might run out. After several rounds of beer, they picked up the keg and started around the lake, having a "real time" and using language unbefitting even the lowest class of people. Cigarettes, of course, were thrown away constantly without thought or care. These boys had been reported the year before by the ranger, as they called him, (contact man) for having a good time at the lake. They were hoping that he would come around again so that they could show him "a thing or two". (Too bad he didn't.) Fuels, of course, were green, and no fires were started. I asked these boys where they were from, and the answer was "Butte". Later, I heard them say, "As if that guy couldn't tell we were from Butte."

I don't believe that people premeditate such careless acts as throwing away cigarettes or leaving campfires which start forest fires. From conversations, I have learned that they do enjoy getting into the forest and wouldn't want these pleasure spots destroyed by fire. Fires are started largely because of ingrained habits of throwing away cigarettes.

Section 4, Posters

The posters which are put up in campgrounds such as "Keep a clean camp", "Drown your camp fire", "Please do not deface trees", "Six Rules for the Camper", "Shovel, Axe and Bucket", and others, do not have very much effect on the camper when the contact man doesn't check the grounds.

I have given field experiences showing how fires are left burning and how cigarettes are thrown away in a careless manner. It is easy to find many trees that are dead because they have been completely girdled by initials or by a small boy playing with his father's ax. The campgrounds where no check is made are, in general, dirty--tin cans are tossed in the brush and garbage is left on, under, and around the table. When the next camper comes into this dirty camp he doesn't clean it up but usually adds to the filth.

I observed the following incident in the field:

A girl called her father's attention to a sign which read, "Do not clean fish in the lake or stream", and he said, "That doesn't make any difference", and then went ahead and cleaned his fish in the lake, throwing the entrails into the water. In another case a boy, whom I judged to be in the fourth grade, asked his mother what "Deface" meant in the sign, "Do not deface green trees". After some thought, she replied, "That means just what you were doing some time ago--chopping into that tree", but she didn't attempt to stop him, and so he continued his chopping.

The poster campaign on the Lolo-Cabinet Forest west of Missoula is farther advanced than anything I have seen on the Beartooth, Beaverhead, or Deerlodge Forests. The wooden signs calling attention to game reserve country, mature trees, young timber, 1910 burn, etc., do draw a great deal of attention.

There are also new hand-painted signs on the Cabinet and Lolo Forests that have caused much favorable comment. These signs are in series, "Two seconds care", "Don't be a flipper", "Use your ash trays", etc. I believe that more of these signs should be put up not only on the highways but also along the railroad right-of-way where other signs are not so apt to detract.

Posters have been put up calling attention to the 1910 burns and to other burns along the highway, and people do marvel at how slowly the timber has grown since these burns. These posters have received comment by local editors and are a great improvement over commonplace signs.

The "Shovel, Axe, and Bucket" poster regulation has very little effect on the forest users--probably because they are not checked closely enough by the contact men or by others working for the Forest Service. The people who come regularly to the picnic grounds close to

Butte and Anaconda seem to carry the shovel, ax, and bucket in the car. The contact man checked a large number of wood haulers and found the ax and water jug because these were needed by the haulers in their work, but he found no shovels. The tools usually carried by the conscientious individual who lives up to this regulation would be of little use if a fire did start. The bucket is usually the camper's small pail which doesn't hold water enough to put out a fire of any size.

Posters that have more than four or five words are of little or no value, because few people will take time to read them. This fact is especially true of motorists on the highway who may be traveling at a high rate of speed. Many times these posters give the wrong impression, because the wording that is in large print is read, and the small print is not seen.

The poster that was put up this spring that showed pictures of Uncle Sam standing in front of a forest fire, pointing an accusing finger at the reader, and saying, "Your forest, your fault, your loss", wasn't a good poster. With the "your forest" and "your loss" part of the poster I agree most heartily, but the "your fault" part brought criticism from people who have always been careful with fire and who resented this implication. Unfavorable criticism sometimes is good publicity, but in the case of this poster, I am afraid that the criticism did more damage than the poster did good.

At this time I wish to refer to posters that are complete in each unit, such as pictures showing, for example, elk, which are in fine condition of health because the range isn't overstocked, grazing on National Forest Land, and then pictures of elk dead or in a dying condition because the range has been overstocked. These posters were displayed in the window of the Butte Commercial Club and drew a great deal of attention from people who noticed tham as they were passing. The location could have been improved, however, as people were not accustomed to looking in this window when they were shopping.

The next series of pictures which I noticed in the same window showed the thousands of head of cattle grazing on the National Forest and gave their value in dollars and cents. This picture, again, was supposed to be complete as a unit. There was a definite carry-over, however, from the first picture of the dead elk grazing on overstocked range and the next picture showing the large number of cattle on National Forest Land, as it seemed as if the elk had died because the cattle had taken the range. I suppose that these two units that I speak of were to be scattered farther apart so that there could be no connection between them. Coming so close together, however, they really were damaging, especially in Butte where the Sportsmen's Association is advocating taking cattle from the range so that they may transplant elk from the large herd of Yellowstone Park into the Deerlodge National Forest. I didn't discover who placed these units in the windows but I supposed that it was a matter of routine with some temporary employee.

Section 5, Radio

Most all people have radios in their homes today--also in their automobiles and summer homes. Ranchers living in remote sections do have sets, usually of the Montgomery Ward & Company battery type which are sufficiently strong to bring in the local station. The farmer's wife or rancher's wife, I have observed, does listen most of the day to the radio, especially when the program pleases her. The radio programs in use today over the Butte station do not seem to be very effective. There is a program on the Farm and Home Hour called "The Forest Ranger" that is popular because it does hold interest, and people do enjoy listening to it once each week. This program doesn't reach people who are at work, however, because it comes at 10:00 in the morning.

Section 6, Radio Records

There are records relating to forestry work played over the Butte Station which are of two or three minutes' duration. I don't believe that these records have any value, for several reasons. First, the way in which this record is announced is very poor. The announcer, usually between programs, states that the following announcement is transcribed, and then the record is played. Most of the record is played before one discovers what it is about. The same method of announcing is followed by too many other announcements such as Carters' Little Liver Pills.

The program that was presented this summer by the Educational Advisers for the CCC Camps showing how the boys in these camps are educated, I thought was one of the best I have heard.

Radio could be a most useful tool in the program of educating the public, if the time could be given by the local forest officer. It must either be a personal appeal by this officer or must carry dramatic appeal through plays to attract interest so that people will listen to the program. People are hungry for information about the fishing, new trails, new roads, hiking trips to lakes, and peaks to climb. If this could be given over the radio in connection with education about care with fire, the Public would appreciate this service very much. I do not know about the cost of such a program but I believe that the local station would donate such time as it would take for this service.

Section 7, Newspaper Stories

The newspaper seems to be the best tool to use in educating the public regarding forestry work. There are, however, a great many people in the vicinity of Butte who do not take the large daily papers because it is common knowledge that these papers belong to the A.C.M. Company. The Miners' Union paper is widely distributed and read,

and other unions seem to have their own newspapers as well. Use could also be made of these union papers in getting forestry educational data before the public. The fact that forest service publicity occurs in papers owned by the A.C.M. Company doesn't damage such publicity in any way. In a political campaign, however, it is a very important fact that politicians do not overlook. Candidates are either for or against the company as shown by their advertising in the papers.

Phillipsburg, Anaconda, and other cities and towns have their own papers that carry articles of local interest and are very widely read by ranchers and farmers in these localities. In local papers a supplement put out by national advertising agencies is included between sheets of these papers. If this sort of advertising or education costs very much, I believe that it should be discontinued for it doesn't have much value. People that get their papers in the post-office usually dispose of this sheet in the nearest waste-paper basket.

Fire is news to the public; whether it is local fire or forest fire. During the past fire season, I discovered that people do keep informed by reading the newspaper. In conversation I asked questions about the fire season. The answer is usually that the fire season in the Deerlodge Forest wasn't bad this year due to the rainfall, but the West Coast Region had some bad fires.

Section 8, Picture Shows for Schools

The picture shows that I have seen shown to audiences in public schools have been a dismal failure. The best part of the program seems to be Mickey Mouse on the last reel. I understand, however, that new pictures have been developed to be shown this year which I have not seen. If these pictures can be made so that they are dramatic as well as educational in makeup, there will be a definite carry-over from one year to the next in the minds of public school children.

There has been a new movement during the past two years that is a progressive idea to take the place of the old lyceum courses and chautauquas that were presented several years ago. This program is called The National School Assemblies Programs, with headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Los Angeles, California. These programs are presented to high schools, junior high schools, and adult groups. The programs are usually about 45 minutes long, some of them, however, do stretch out to an hour or an hour and a half.

Titles of some of the programs used are: "Hanscom Players", "Bohemian Glass Blowers", "Swiss Singers", "Dr. Jean Piccard", and "Television". These programs are enjoyed very much by high school students, and the players seem to "get across" so that the students remember them from one year to the next and look forward to having them come again. These players generally present one-act or three-act plays that are very dramatic.

Now, it is my thought that these players might present something of educational value about the forests. Or the players might be made up from the personnel in regional offices who could present such plays to high school students, especially in the western part of Montana. These plays might be written by high school students through the dramatics or English department and presented by students as is done in Missoula County High School every spring. A great many ideas could be secured from the radio programs presented over N.B.C. during the "Farm and Home Hour" every week.

Such a program as this will carry over from one year to the next, and if put on twice a year, I think it would be very helpful in fire prevention work. The plays might be preceded by a talk by a forest officer who is gifted enough to make the high school students listen to what he has to say. The plays also might be presented to such organizations as Parent-Teacher Groups, civic organizations, miners' unions, and to fraternal organizations that are always looking for help to make their evenings successful by having an interesting program to present.

Section 9, The Contact Man

The temporary employee who is employed during the summer months and called the contact man holds a very important position in the Firest Service. He is considered by the Public In General as the Forest Ranger. This man is usually a student from one of the forestry schools, but I know of several cases where he was one of the local boys with no forestry training or a teacher who didn't have any knowledge of forestry. These men are gathered together in the spring of the year for two or three days in a training school. After they have finished the season in the fall of the year, they are allowed to go back to their respective winter jobs or to no jobs at all, and no one benefits from their summer's experience in dealing with the public. The next year, a new crop is usually hired; the men of the year before usually go to positions paying more money. These new men are trained again in two or three days and then go into the fields. I do not believe that this training period is long enough nor intensive enough for this important position.

I believe that the work of the contact man is important enough for him to be a permanent employee who has been put through a training period of at least three months, and he should be chosen with great care from the graduates coming from the forestry schools of today. He should be a gifted speaker so that he can talk to civic organizations and to miners' unions; show groups into new locations for campgrounds; secure their aid in development; arrange programs over the radio that have local color; and write articles of interest under the Heading of Forest Ranger.

The contact man of today, who is considered the Forest Ranger by the public, is really the chore boy of the public campground. It is his lot to clean up after the camper who has left his campgrounds dirty. If wood is furnished, he hauls the wood around from one fireplace to another replenishing the supply twice each week. He paints the gate or the fence if it needs painting and does other chores for the ranger during the week when the campgrounds are not busy.

It seems that someone else other than the Forest Ranger should have this campground work to do. Now-a-days when W.P.A. workmen are so plentiful, I would like to see one man assigned to each campground or group of campgrounds to do this work. If he had more time than this requires, he could be cutting a supply of wood for use in the campgrounds. The contact man could distribute these men on his daily rounds.

The uniforms the Contact men wear do not distinguish them from other men who go into the stores and buy the same kind of green tie, trousers, and shirt. No one can tell them apart. The car these men drive is usually a car that has been handed down after many months of use by permanent employees--unpainted, ready for discard. As this car rattles in and out of the public campgrounds, it makes a very poor impression on the people in the campgrounds. I'm afraid that if the contact man tried to stop a car after someone had thrown out a cigarette, he would be left far behind.

The contact man has a very definite schedule as he goes from one campground to another. Usually when he leaves after his scheduled visit, one doesn't expect to see him until the next day at the same time. He works in the camps that are close to town where the same people come for picnics time after time. This regular routine should be broken so that people might expect the ranger to rattle in at any moment.

It seems to me that this contact man is working where the danger of fire is not very great, and many people who go back farther away from town never see a contact man, or anyone connected with the Forest Service. These people are the ones more apt to set dangerous fires that may not be discovered until they reach Class "C".

People who are contacted by game wardens in this back country talk at great length about it. I believe that the same would hold true if these people were contacted on the trail, or back in primitive areas. Word of such contacts would be passed from one person to another very rapidly.

People do accept the contact man in the field. He doesn't have to mention the purpose of his visit--so often they promise to be careful with fire before he mentions this matter to them.

The younger generation are a discipline problem to the contact man. I think they would have more respect for a man who is older. The drunken parties present a problem not always easy to handle.

Campgrounds are in a deplorable condition when they are not covered by a contact man. The number of men covering this field should be materially increased, for their work is most effective, especially when they have been well trained in their work.

Section 10, Forest Rangers

I camped in the public campgrounds; fished in streams in the National Forest; and hiked over trails in the National Forest for a period covering two months.

During this time, I talked to two Rangers, one who was showing the Elks who had gathered at Anaconda for their state convention around the nearby lakes, and one who was starting on a pack trip into the mountains to "Ride the Range". I also saw one forest officer from the Butte office ride through a campground read in a pick-up with a fishing pole in the back. I cite these occasions to show that contact with the true Forest Ranger on the National Forest is lacking. This is due, probably, to the lack of time because of the more pressing duties of the Ranger.

I wish to relate the following field experience to show that the impression other people have of the forest ranger is that he is a man trained to fight fire and nothing else. The many duties that he has to perform regarding trail and road building, grazing management, etc. are completely hidden from the public. The contact man and the temporary employee are usually mistaken for the ranger.

The secretary of the commercial club of one of our larger cities in Montana was given a two weeks vacation. He wished to take advantage of this opportunity to see the state so that he could be more useful in his daily work of contacting people who wished to learn about our state.

His party included his immediate family of two daughters, his wife, and his mother. They were staying in tourist cabins and were cooking their own meals. When I met them, they had been through both of the National Parks and in many of the towns that border on or are in the National Forest. He went into great detail to tell me about the National Park ranger who had talked to them one evening about the Parks. This ranger left an impression that will never be forgotten by the members of this family. His subjects were well chosen: the wild flowers that grow in the Park and the habits of the bears. This man told me about the dress of this ranger, and he was especially impressed because the ranger was so neat in his uniform of highly polished boots, western hat, green suit, and because the ranger had such a pleasing personality.

I asked this man if he had met any of the National Forest Rangers. He said that he hadn't met one and that, anyway, it wasn't their duty to contact the public as they were only trained to fight fires.

I have observed forest rangers, assistant supervisors and supervisors speaking before civic clubs. The men who have had a great deal of experience in this work make a very good impression. These men, however, who speak just once or twice during a season do a very poor job and make a poor impression, and it would really be better if they would just talk freely regarding field experiences.

On every possible occasion I went into a Ranger Station to ask about campgrounds, fishing and other things, but I didn't contact the Ranger on these occasions. I met some temporary employees who answered all questions in a very courteous manner, as a rule. These men, however, do not impress one as do the men in the Park Service who are trained to meet the public and who do so very successfully.

Section 11, Show Me Trips

I realize that these trips are planned to show people living in the nearby cities parts of the country that are in need of further development. The primitive areas recently set aside are covered on these trips. The reaction to these trips on the part of the public however, is that only those people who may have political influence or local influence get to go along.

I was asked to go on one of these trips this year. Just as soon as people in my community learned that I was going, they began to inquire how they could "get a drag" so as to be one of the party. Of course, these groups have to be limited, or, otherwise, the cost of travel would be prohibitive. All of these details are not understood by the public, and criticism is the result.

The particular trip which I have mentioned was the one into the Beartooth Mountains which was made this summer. This trip received more mention and comment than it should have, due to an enthusiastic reporter of the "Butte Standard", who wrote up a story as sensational as a murder story and then put it upon the front page of the paper. The information regarding lakes and glaciers was greatly exaggerated.

Section 12, The C.C.C.

One hears many favorable comments regarding the C.C.C. camps. This is due to the fact that these boys are working on roads, public campgrounds, and poor water supplies, and they are recognized as making improvements for the public.

The boys have been given a new wholesome environment. In the field, I heard of one case in Butte where the boy went to the C.C.C. camp to get away from his drunken father who "beat up on him" every day. The money that was sent home was wasted by the father on drink until the boy's married sister found that she could place this money in the bank for the boy's education.

The man in charge of Penny's store told me, as we talked about the C.C.C. camp, that he hadn't thought these camps were of much value until he made a trip with the local Kiwanis club out to the camp for dinner one evening. At this meeting the C.C.C. leaders explained their progress in education and in developments which they were making for the good of the country. After this meeting, this man was completely "sold" on C.C.C. camps.

I discovered in talking with the Educational Adviser of the camp at Flint Creek that credits earned by taking high school courses in the C.C.C. educational program are not accepted in our public high schools. I found in asking for a transcript of credits for a boy who was enrolled the past year in our high school that his credits were accepted because he had made connections with the closest local high school. This connection should be made in every camp so that high school students may get credit for their work.

I also discovered that compulsory attendance for class work isn't required in these camps, although one hundred percent participation in the educational program is required. It is rather difficult to get boys enrolled in the right courses under this present plan.

In talking with some of the boys, I discovered that they had been very lonesome until girls were transported from town by truck for dances. The dances were held in a building, and no one was allowed to leave during the evening; however, many acquaintances were formed so that the boys became acquainted with people and when they were allowed to leave camp they went into town and enjoyed meeting the girls whom they had met at the dances in camp.

I found that the C.C.C. camps are training camps for men who are teaching in the W.P.A. Adult Education Program. These men who need experience get it by teaching for several months in the "C" camps, and then they are transferred to W.P.A. work. I believe that this practice should be turned around so that these men will get experience in the adult education field and then teach the younger generation in the "C" camps.

If higher qualifications were demanded of the teachers in these camps, the courses offered would be more attractive and more useful to the students. The work done by students under teachers having qualifications similar to these required of our public high school teachers would also be acceptable for credit by the State Department of Education.

Section 13, Roads

The fact that people do not realize that roads cost a great deal of money to build is very unfortunate. We have such wonderful highways today that we never stop to think whether the Bureau of Public Roads, The State Highway Commission, or the Forest Service built them. So,

credit for road building, if credit is given, is usually placed at the wrong door. The public does not realize that thousands of dollars are spent each year so that they may ride through National Forests and take advantage of excellent fishing, hunting, etc., close at hand.

The forest roads do not necessarily have to be great wide boulevards--just an occasional turn-out is necessary. People enjoy traveling over new country, especially back where it is hard to find other people fishing the same stream or hunting the same slope. More roads built so that people can get back to the edge of the primitive areas seem to be the immediate need.

County roads leading to forest roads are often in need of maintenance. This fact keeps people away from the forest roads. If these cases were noted and reported, pressure on county commissioners to work such roads would be a great help to people who go out to enjoy a trip through the forest.

Section 14, Grazing

The branch of the Forest Service which regulates grazing on forest lands seems to receive more criticism than all of the other branches put together. The man who has cattle on the forest resents being regulated, but values his grazing permit, while the man who cannot get a permit severely blames the Service for favoring the "Big Shot". Common criticism seems to be that the little man now-a-days doesn't have a chance for a permit. Sportsmen's Clubs are adding to the unrest of the rancher by attempting to get the cattle out of the forests to make more room for wild life.

The ranchers in the Madison River country and in the Big Hole country seem to be quite satisfied with their grazing permits, but it is common to hear that they are living in constant fear that the men in Washington will take away their grazing permits to make room for elk and deer. These ranchers probably get this idea from reading the Butte newspapers; for the sportsmen are attempting, by working through Senator Murray, to get a bill passed to transplant the surplus elk population of Yellowstone Park into the Deerlodge Forest area so that local big game hunting will be improved. Articles telling about this activity appear quite frequently on the front page.

An intensive educational program in this field seems to be in order to make clear the fact that there's room for sheep, cattle, and wild life on National Forest lands.

Ranchers in the Boulder River country this past year were asked to hire a rider to keep their sheep and cattle on land where they belonged. The ranchers resented this regulation because this additional expense raised their operation costs.

Ranchers in the Rock Creek drainage were "kicking because they were accused of turning too many cattle into the forest and so had to round up all of these cattle and recount them. One rancher resented the regulation regarding putting out salt as he claimed that he had to put out twice as much salt as was needed. He reasoned that the cattle were his and that no one except himself would lose if he didn't put out enough salt.

I hope someday to find a rancher who is completely satisfied with his permit.

Section 15, Fishing

Fishing as a recreational activity attracts many people into the National Forests. The Butte miners and the Anaconda smeltermen do not work on Saturday afternoons nor on Sundays. Most of these men haven't been working regularly this past summer because the A.C.M. mines have been working part time. When "off shift", these men go into the mountains to camp and fish.

The miner who is classed as a real sportsman likes to catch the rainbow and the native fish, but I found that there is a dislike for the Eastern Brook Trout that has been planted in the fast streams. When these fishermen catch the Eastern Brook Trout, they commonly throw the fish into the brush instead of saving them or putting them back into the stream.

The Finlanders as fishermen are especially hard on any stream they fish. They bring their lunch; sit down on the bank of a stream; and then fish that one hole with bait, taking every fish before moving to a new location. The kind of fish doesn't seem to make much difference to these people: they take suckers as readily as trout, whitefish,or grayling.

Ranchers and farmers own much of the land along many of the rivers and streams as they do along the Big Hole River in Beaverhead County and along the Stillwater River in Stillwater County. These land owners have watched fishermen tramp through their hay meadows and fields. They have told me that some people from Butte readily take home turkeys, young lambs, and chickens if the opportunity to do so presents itself. The people living beside water that affords good fishing have, therefore, banded together to keep other persons off their land. I watched one farmer grow red with anger when a car from Butte stopped on his land to camp.

The result of this antagonism is that people who wish to fish find streams closed to them until they reach the National Forest boundary. Then, in order to find a spot in which to fish one almost has to push someone else into the stream. In these concentrated sections on National Forest Land the fish have been depleted until huge plantings from Federal Hatcheries is the only action that I can see which will save our fishing streams in Montana. I wish that more cooperation between the land owner and the fisherman were possible.

Last spring our local Rod and Gun Club asked the Billings club for two hundred dollars to help plant fish in the Stillwater River. The answer was that the money would be available when we opened the river so that Billings people could fish in the stream.

Dude ranchers and people from the East seem to be coming into our state in greater numbers each year. They are buying up the ranches close to primitive areas and to the mountains and are closing the water on their land to the public fisherman. This water is then fished by private parties and by dudes staying at the resorts. It seems to me that when the public is excluded from a stream, the stream should be closed to everyone including the land owner, for the fish belong to the state.

Section 16, Big Game Control

The sportsmen of Montana are concerned about the activity which the Forest Service has carried on during the past few years in connection with wild life control. The sportsmen are afraid that if the Forest Service did take over this work that the control would be in the hand of men in Washington who would not understand local conditions. There is strong political activity at the present time to prevent the Forest Service from assuming this control. This action comes from within sportsmen groups which are bringing pressure upon our Senators and Representatives to leave control in the hands of the State Fish and Game Commission. The Butte sportsmen seem to have complete control over this group.

Reforms in closing the proper areas to hunting cannot be made under the present political set up. I recall an area that was recommended to be closed during this coming hunting season in Stillwater County by an appointed committee of the local Rod and Gun Club. The State Commission fulfilled the committee's request and closed the area which they asked to have closed. At the present time state senators are making this a political issue in the coming election because the action of the State Commission brought criticism from local people. One senator is bringing pressure upon the State Commission, and the area that was closed will soon be opened to hunting again.

The firing line on Decker Flat, just outside of Yellowstone Park, where thousands of elk are killed each year brings a great deal of criticism upon all concerned. I haven't found a person who favors this method of slaughter which is carried on each year. I spent three days in a dude ranch at the head of Decker Flat last year and was on hand the day when more than twelve-hundred elk were killed. After the shooting was over, I mixed with the killers and learned that to a man they too were disgusted with this method of slaughter. I heard stories about the magnificent bull elk which was completely riddled with bullets before he went down and about the elk which were completely surrounded, shot at from all sides, and then killed when their blood was hot by which action the meat was ruined.

Many solutions to this problem have been offered. Among these are: 1. Allow the elk to drift back into the forest where the hunter has to hunt for his elk; 2. Slaughter the elk as cattle are slaughtered and then auction the meat; 3. Transplant this herd into National Forests to improve the hunting. Methods number one and three seem to be gaining in favor.

Section 17, Law Enforcement

Law enforcement that can be effected without the aid of the courts or the help of local officers seems to be far better than enforcement with their help. I found from conversation with the local people in Butte and Anaconda that it is very hard to get a judgment against an individual because the judge is usually looking for votes and realizes that his decision may be held against him in the coming election, and so the individual is generally turned loose without a fine.

The duty of law enforcement often falls on the temporary employee who does not have sufficient experience or training to cope with the situation, and mistakes are often made because of this fact. I wish to relate the following field experience that illustrates this point.

A local rancher--near Willow Creek--had several piles of brush to burn; so, disregarding the fire season, he began burning the brush. His reason for burning was that it had rained steadily all spring: the grass was wet; and there was very little fire danger. The Forest Service Lookout reported the smoke; called the Forest Guard, who investigated and asked the man to stop the burning. The rancher had several small piles of brush left, however; so he continued the burning. The deputy sheriff was then called in and was promptly shot twice in the arm by the rancher, who resented the presence of this man on his ranch. The sheriff then came to the scene to make the arrest and killed the man in the shooting scrape that followed.

The Forest Service was in line for criticism according to Mr. Rancher because it started the whole thing, and, besides, the brush fire couldn't do any damage as everything was wet and green.

The man who told me this story was prejudiced against the Service because he couldn't get a grazing permit for his rodeo stock last winter and finally had to sell the whole string. He tells this story at every opportunity to people camped in the public campgrounds, also, I believe, to many fishing parties that he takes into the mountains, for it is in this way that he makes his living. He doesn't hesitate to add other damaging statements such as "The rangers are a lot of college 'punks' just out of school who don't have any practical knowledge to go on. The little fellow doesn't have any chance anymore; the big outfits control the grazing land. The Forest Service caters to the 'Big Shot'".

If the brush burning operation could have been stopped by reasoning with the man or by force within the organization, the present criticism would have been avoided, and a life would have been saved. To overcome this criticism now is almost impossible. It will take years to erase the incident from people's minds.

A simple trespass case handled badly, as is shown in the following field experience, makes an enemy for generations to come.

A local rancher, living close to Stony Creek Camp Ground, had lived on his farm with a few head of stock before the Forest Service was created. He took out a homestead some distance away from the road, and, evidently, neglected to file on some land between his homestead and the road. His milk stock grazed for years on the land adjoining his land. The Forest Service recently made a campground by enclosing this land with a fence, and it was necessary for the rancher to bring his stock through this area where they had been accustomed to graze. According to the rancher, the cattle broke into this area, and the ranger immediately started a trespass case for $9.50, for he said that the stock had been turned into the camp ground. The rancher would have paid the fine had it been just, but he refused to pay, saying that he would borrow the money to fight the case in court because he hadn't turned the stock into the campgrounds. Time went along. The rancher heard nothing more about the case until the ranger stopped him one day as he was riding on horseback and asked him when he was going to pay the fine. The rancher replied that he never would pay the fine and started to climb off his horse to "clean up" on the ranger who immediately drove off, and the rancher hasn't seen him again to this day. (He has probably been transferred to another district.) "They have left me alone since then", the rancher went on to say, "but the fellows up the river have been catching 'hell'. They think that too many cattle were turned into the forest; so they're making them round up all the stock so that they can be counted. You have to put out twice as much salt as the cattle need. The cattle belong to me, and you'd think I'd know how much salt they should have."

This rancher invited me to dinner one evening, and I met the other members of his family. His son is married and living at home, and the rancher's mother is also with them. The old folks haven't many more years to "knock" the Forest Service, but the younger generation, too, has acquired the habit and are very antagonistic toward the Service.

It is almost hopeless to attempt to change these people after such an incident has occurred. There are some things that could be done, such as allowing them to graze stock on the campsite after the camping season is closed. A special use permit or personal contact would also help a great deal. These people, of course, since they live close to the campgrounds, sell dairy products to the campers. They welcomed the opportunity of talking to me and so would soon spread such propaganda among the people stopping on the campsite.

Fire education that is included in the regular story each time a fire occurs seems to be the most effective kind of newspaper publicity. It is possible to get this education in an article, especially when the local reporter will accept the article as written. Associated Press stories often lack this educational feature, probably because the articles are written by a reporter instead of by a forest officer.

The Shovel, Axe, and Bucket Regulation appears in the newspapers stating that the regulation is to go into effect on such and such a date, but I have never noticed any explanation as to why people are asked to carry these tools. An explanation probably would seem unnecessary to the forest officer, but it would be helpful to the public.

The following section of this report is an endeavor to answer specifically, on the basis of the foregoing field experiences, the questions listed in the foreword of this paper.

A. 1. (a) People do not connect careless acts to the possible destruction of the forests. See Case No. 1, page 4; section 3, cigarettes, page 3, and section 3, page 4.

(b) Injury to their own welfare. Refer to the same references.

A. 2. Careless acts such as leaving campfires burning, throwing away lighted cigarettes and matches are due to ingrained habits, and, in the case of campfires left burning, this action is generally due to the fact that it is easier to leave the fire than to carry water to put it out; and we are all prone to do things in the easiest way. People are not ignorant of just what to do and how to do it in order to be certain that fires are not started, but they do not stop to realize the consequences of tossing out a lighted cigarette or match. Refer to section 1, pages 1 and 2, and to section 3, page 3.

A. 3. Reaction on posters is answered in section 4, page 6; newspapers, section 7, page 8; personal contacts on the ground, section 9, page 10; law enforcements, section 17, page 18; and radio, section 5 and 6, page 8.

A. 4. A change of emphasis should be made so that all the tools of education, such as the newspaper, radio, contact man, and posters, would concentrate to overcome one bad habit. When this habit had been corrected, then another specific program could be begun. The present program seems to be too general with a decided lack of coordination. Fire

education seems to be way ahead of education along other lines such as grazing and wildlife control; so that a change of emphasis to other branches of the service would indirectly aid fire education. For references to this question see section 8, page 9, Assembly Programs for Schools, and section 5, page 8, Use of the Radio.

A. 5. The best appeal to create a sense of "personal ownership" values in the National Forests seems to be to offer more recreational opportunities to get the public to use their National Forests. Communities are clamoring for more campground sites, ski runs, supervised hiking trips, hiking stations, better fishing spots, more roads to primitive areas, shelters in the primitive areas for the hiker, roads to lakes where boating and swimming can be enjoyed, less summer home sites and more camping grounds in these areas with shelters provided--when the public begins to use the National Forests, there will be a definite desire to protect them.

A. 6. People do not have an understanding of Forest Service objectives, with one exception--fire prevention; nor do they have any conception of the routine connected with the work of the forest officer.

For reference to wildlife management, see sections 15 and 16, pages 16-18. For references to grazing, see section 14, page 15; for recreation see sections 1 and 2.

I believe that the public is willing to leave timber management alone because no one understands this field. Wood haulers on the Deerlodge are the only timber users at the present time. When the mines are running, mining stulls are sold to the A.C.M. Company.

A. 7. For a discussion of educational methods, see sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

A. 8. It would be very difficult to move those people in Butte who are classed as W.P.A. workers to construction camps on P.W.A. projects or to pursuade them to live in smaller communities. The present population is proud of Butte and is proud to say that it lives in Butte. These People will remain there as long as the hope remains that the mines will run again some day.

B. 1. Conventions which these people consider right.

People in Butte and Anaconda live in an environment that is "wide open" as far as law enforcement is concerned. Their custom seems to be to grab everything that comes their way, regardless of the law. If the law does "catch up" with anyone, he uses all of the political influence at his command to "beat the law". See section 15.

The workers in Butte have been pushed around; they have starved, or they have lived well as the Company has wished them to do. It is a custom to belong to a union of some sort, and all trades are unionized. "Scabs", as workers are called who do not belong to unions, are very much in the minority. It is through the unions that individuals gain political power, as through these it is possible for such persons to control a great many votes in elections.

It is the custom in Butte for people who speak their native language to band together in different sections of the city. There's the Finlander section, the Italian section, the Negro section, the Chinese section, and many others. Most of these people speak English fluently unless they are with others of their own race and then they speak their native language.

The morals of people in Butte in general are very low; there are, of course, many fine families who live entirely differently from the common man. There is a red-light district in Butte which is only two blocks from main street and which is the same distance from the new high school building.

It seems to be all right in Butte for high school girls to go camping without a chaperone.

Most everyone, including women, in Butte gambles if there is money on hand; and gambling times are much better when the mines are running. It isn't necessary to look for the gambling dives for one can find them right on main street, open with every conceivable money-making device.

Butte is noted for its hospitality. I have attended several conventions in Butte, and these have certainly lived up to their reputations. During these conventions, Butte people show, with some pride, their night clubs, gambling houses and other places of vice which are found wide open only in this city.

It is the custom for Butte people to believe that everything they do can't be surpassed as is indicated in the titles, "Wildest Rodeo on Earth", and "The Richest Hill on Earth". The people in Butte operate, by popular subscription, the Maiden Rock Fish Hatchery, which, according to their conversation, is the largest hatchery in the world.

Many of the state commissions, such as the Fish and Game Commission, the State Highway Commission, and others, are "run" in Butte; and the unions seem to be very proud of this control.

B. 2. Religion

The Catholic religion is strong in Butte but doesn't seem to have any bearing on the Forest Service.

B. 3. Superstitions

There does not seem to be any superstitions that needs further study.

B. 4. Economic Status

People in Butte and Anaconda who work in the mines and the smelter live on an anticipated income; this is shown by the large automobiles which they drive. It is the custom for the younger generation to live with their parents through the high school period or until they can get work with the A.C.M. Company. Then, just as soon as their income warrants such action, they get married--so generation after generation live in Butte, working for the Company.

When the mines are open, their income allows them a comfortable living. At the present time, they have to lower their standards of living to get by on W.P.A., but they like this carefree life. It was reported to me that last summer when the mines were open, the miners wouldn't "get off" W.P.A. because they were afraid that they couldn't get on again if the mines were closed, and it was necessary for the Company to hire outside men.

B. 5. There is only one motive for forest burning, and that is to provide employment, but these people won't fight fire because the Forest Service doesn't pay union wages nor do they stop with eight hours of work; so even this motive doesn't exist among the working class of people.

B. 6. For references to attitudes toward newspapers, etc. see sections 4, 5, 6, 7.

B. 7. Attitude toward forest burning.

These people do not like to see the forest burn. They appreciate the green forests because all of the mountains around Butte and Anaconda have been ruined by smelter fumes. Their streams have been ruined by tailings from the mills. They enjoy getting away from these cities into the public campgrounds.

B. 8. Attitude toward Forest Service

(a) Personnel

The public doesn't see the true forest officer very often; so the public doesn't have a fair oponion of the Forest Service. There were several occasions last summer upon which I prayed that a forest ranger would be seen in a public campground instead of the temporary employee.

I have found that everyone who has come into contact with the true forest officer is generous with praise regarding the courteous, fair, and thoughtful treatment of each case up for consideration.

I have talked with temporary employees who have not been "sold" on the Service. These people do criticise regular employees and help to crystallize public opinion in that light. Temporary employees often endeavor to answer questions for the Service, even though they do not understand what they are trying to explain, and thus they make many errors.

(b) Forest Service regulations as affecting the group investigated.

Regulations of the Forest Service do not affect the people of Butte and Anaconda for they don't pay any attention to such regulations. Ranchers living in this vicinity dislike to be regulated when they have cattle on the forest, and they do not hesitate to talk about it.